



Learning To Miss

Catherine B. Krause

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These 4 Simple Tricks Will Help You Master the Art of People
Originally published in Uut Poetry

The worst thing about people is they're not real —
you may have thought you'd seen them from time to time,
grown up convinced you were going to become one,
swallowed the thunder whole because you had no choice,
drank the lightning and spilled rain all over a French bum
who called you a slob and told you to enjoy it elsewhere,
played tambourine in choir with cold people, eaten people,
watched people talk about people on TV and sworn,
but their commune in the Misty Mountains where everything is
beautiful's a lie; they've never been spotted there
and everyone knows it.

Shopping

Originally published in Argot Magazine.

men
will
clock me
at the store
and get so angry
as if i'm doing this for them
like i'm fucking milk
with the wrong
label,
price,
date,
smell,
or
maybe
made of soy
when they wanted cows'
but i'm not even a product
i'm just shopping here
so fuck off
mind your
own
shit

The Way to a Man's Heart Killed the Cat

Originally published in Uut Poetry

You grabbed my cat and took her to the center of your heart, said "come and get it if you want it." I asked what you wanted and you gave me a list of demands. I asked about the finer points and decimal places of each item on the list and you responded in detailed soliloquy. I dreamt you were holding me close as we walked down the street; you were wearing a suit and I was radiant. I fulfilled each item in my faux leather catsuit over the course of three days. When they were over you said goodbye and the cat starved to death.

The Tippler

Originally published in Non-Binary Review #16, where it was paired with Chapter 12 of The Little Prince.

These times remind you of the little white dusty things in life,
the sinus infection after a night of homeopathic disappointment,
how easy it is to compromise and find common ground if you care
for the pie in front of you instead of celestial salad.

The cat wonders why you aren't cuddling with her;
she hasn't figured out that you stay up late every Friday.
She's never seen you lick bags you found in the trash
in the bathrooms of gay bars, so forgive her naivety.

People reach out, say you've beaten this before, you can do it again.
What's the point? you ask. You know the point. You know this isn't helping.
You know it's hard to save the world with an unquenched longing,
irrelevant once it's quenched because the guy you just met is too interesting.

Curse the demons Trump is personally sending up your nose.
It's too hard, you say, and you can't even quit doing this shit
for more than two years, so you're hardly the one to do it.
Union thugs offer help from the dimension beyond, but the cat is sleeping.

On Throwing Oneself at the Ground and Missing

Originally published in Argot Magazine on July 13, 2018.

Everyone forgets that Icarus knew damn well his wings were made of wax
and the sun was hot and eventually if he flew too high he would fall
but this time, he thought, this time I really need to make it to Sicily
but I think I'll fly a bit higher anyway because I like the way the sun feels
and how it tans my skin and energizes me and makes things so much better
for that brief moment but right this moment I think it's important I bask
from closer than I've ever basked before and I know one of these days
it's going to melt my wings but that's a long way away and I need this now
and if I don't get it then life will be unbearable and insufferable,
I deserve it because I've done so much good in my life and going closer
to the sun is what good people deserve, and oh shit, oh shit, oh shit

Nobody Signed Up for Cybrepunk

Originally published in Uut Poetry

A soft-spoken Italian woman is puking into a bag.
She has never been to Italy. She has no Italian ancestry.
Mostly she is doing this because she likes it,
but being cool certainly has something to do with it.

A French bread pizza has been rotting in the microwave
since John Kerry was President of Atlantis. Salads.
She keeps saying "Non voglio morire, non voglio morire."

The nurse tells her to speak English, but she won't
let them bring her a dinner that isn't vegan,
just bring her a salad for Satan's cake.

I agree with your position but the last straw came
when Leia started selling students water,
triggering uproarious laughter from the peanut shells.
No one has ever been to France, not even God.

Yellow

Originally published in Igxante: An Ontology.

Beware of ideological purity: what looks like a pearl
will have you sweating refrigerated water, puking into a bag
and wondering where all those liberals came from.
Cats and dogs are more alike than they're different,
although sandwiches from Neptune taste different when you're an alien fish.
Captain Hook disappears from the old color film

from the era of black and white, reappears and lectures
the handsome man about why pirates can never mix with guys in suits
and no one cares except the whiteboard behind them displaying the name of your nurse
from yesterday, the vase of withered flowers in the blue and purple painting,
or the cautionary tale against getting up and falling
that you've never heeded before and you're not about to start.

18 Problems With Easy Solutions

Originally published in Uut Poetry

I'll admit this doesn't look good, but what is life
but a trip to the hospital, admission,
and a series of grams to the heart?

When Jonah's sister swallowed the whale whole,
she wasn't thinking of the sound of her fish sticks
dipping salaciously into the abyss.

You've never thrown me to the windows in English,
capitalism, but you've brought me close
to the corny mahogany of solitude.

In the end it all boils down

and we are left to deal with the mushy remains as we stare at the visualizer and plan out our lives.

Domestic Bus

Originally published in Uut Poetry

Try to check out of a dormitory the size of a large hotel.
There is a long line and someone is arguing with the person at the desk.
Walk around for a bit, come back, and the line is even longer.

Get out of bed and climb the steps in the freezing cold.
It might as well be time for coffee, so boil some water.
Clicking through the news, I realize Philip K. Dick was right.

Donald Trump Keeps Showing Up In My Poems Uninvited

Originally published in Igxante: An Ontology.

Marches in like he owns the place, kicks off his shoes
and starts barking orders at words until they're sick of him.

Every night you come back just as ruthless as ever
to remind me why my scar will never disappear.

It's freezing outside and my shoes aren't suitable for the weather
and I can't find any in my size but I have to go to Buffalo.

It honestly feels like everything is pointless so I'll grab the lighter
and try to take control, only giving myself more to take control over.

I tried numbing myself the way I always used to and ended up in the hospital;
apparently that solution only works five hundred thousand times and I'm back to square one.

Every time I meet a closeted trans woman who says I've inspired her to come out,
I have to talk her through a crisis and I wonder if I'm responsible.

Blowing up the boulder seems impossible, so I just stay in front of it;
maybe if I purify my wavy thoughts enough I'll be able to pull myself over.

On the Farbeing of Breathcrystals

Originally published in Uut Poetry

the angiochopped carpet lags
lightly in the cold, happylaced, gives up
the autocontextualized coal miner
to your uberdefeated April's
sametraumatic something—

the idiogross way
your thoughtpuzzle hairpiece
twasme'd the hintersalutatory shimmer
offintending the discontrastified author
before it was too late to something—

storycomes your skipaccording sun
in a fistulafactual expression
of ursanguine prehabilitation,
the misgargantuan strangle which, saltily feigning it,
accounthappens all your neighbor's dawning.

Me

Originally published in Uut Poetry

I am unsure where my burrito went wrong.
I am repeatedly possessed by the terror of peanut butter.
I am worried the darker pigment on my skin means I have something wrong with my kidneys.
I am unable to get the urologist to schedule me the procedure he intended to schedule.
I am too tired and disabled to look for a new one.
I am ugly despite the objections of everyone around me.
I am reading the cat's fur and trying to find an omen of good luck.
I am too young to have had a heart attack.
I am already neurotic by nature and now I'm even more likely to think my panic attacks are serious.
I am a funny attempt at perfection that ends up making a fool of itself.
I am not OK with Nazis taking over and I never will be.
I am in a chair with the hiccups and I wonder what this means.
I am trying to learn Arabic but there's only so much you can learn from your bedroom.
I am trying to build wings out of snow but it's already melted and I never got off the ground.
I am trying to learn Spring but I always end up rehashing the same old Summer instead.
I am programmed in Oz and I wish I was programmed in Haskell.
I am a Hebrew letter scratched on a sheet of paper in a small room.
I am the look of horror on the scratcher's face when she talks about how work almost freed her.

Men Are Bidets, Women Are Bombers

Originally published in Uut Poetry

All the books face away except two,
one black, one white, all pointing different
directions on top of the scarf they are crushing,
dwindling under the Scaramuccis of botany.

Men are bidets, women bombers,
and everyone outside a diadem over the daffodils,
everyone in between is a casserole,
and no one will ever convince me

Roosting Chickens

Originally published in TERSE Journal

Monetize the series of tubes no matter how
no matter what goes up through them
no matter if it must come down
the bullets fly our stocks go up
and no one's gotta worry about a thing
because we live in condos
drinking Johnny Walker Blue
and microdosing vaping popping addy
as the world destroys itself around us
Atlas Shrugging at those peasants
mortgages and private schools
but suddenly a shot bursts out
and titans fall like redwood trees
and no one gives a fuck
except the media and Internet
all ready to give their hot takes
thanks to you.

Hot Take

Originally published in Cockroach Conservatory

Postmodernism is an ink blot:
a menacing insect with the head of my abuser.
I tried showing it the depths of the unconscious
but it used this against me, said I'd go to jail
if I didn't shut up and take its constant stinging.
The truth is a superposition of digital infinities:
you splotch the ink in the manner of your choosing
and I create the image in my mind, tell you what it is
and you burn an inch into my skin.
None of this should be interpreted
but when did that ever stop anyone?
Waking up several times a night is a black cat
sitting at my foot, a string in the shape of a symbol,
and a testament to the poverty of the stimulant
for the cigarette box instead of the mobile phone.

The Unpainted Night

Originally published in Uut Poetry

In our queer history of the United States, my love,
what will we conclude about the big orange elephant in the room,
the shotgun waiting to erupt from my smooth innocent hands,
the Starry Night Van Gogh didn't paint because he was confined to an asylum;
we must determine that nothing is what it is, or is it?

On the futon in your bedroom, with our girlfriend,
each taking turns wearing the blindfold that we use to take control
over our pain,
it will be the test of our melancholy and the soother of our courage
to let the black light point out the insufficiencies of our system
so we can grab the pickaxe off the dinner table.

What we just covered was the absolute negation of the following:
art is given by God to His Creation in order to glorify Him,
so leave the black lights to the Eternal; you won't need them in Paradise.

This Poem Is Coming Out as a Trans Poem

Originally published in Rabbit: A Journal for Nonfiction Poetry

Ever since this poem was a trans idea
in its trans author's trans head, it has wanted to be
a trans poem in a trans issue of a literary journal. It began
before conception in the author's high school English class,
when her teacher told the class from the front of the room,

"You, too, can be trans poets. All you have to do is write,
and be trans. You may one day win a poetry prize
for trans people, if you work really hard at it.
Go to trans workshops, submit to trans journals
and trans issues of journals, work on trans bios
about how long you have known you were a trans poet, and
whether your family accepts that you are trans
and a poet. You must study hard the craft of trans poetry.
Buy every trans issue you see on the shelves.
There aren't very many right now because it's 1999,
but trust me: this will come in handy some day,
when the poetry world starts acknowledging the existence
of trans poets who write trans poetry for trans journals."

This poem intends to be revised, but it has not
had The Surgery yet. Its new name is Trans Poem.
Always refer to it by the correct title; never call it
Good Poem or Good Poet's Poem. Respect this poem's transness;
mention it at every opportunity, with one exception:
never mention this poem's transness when you justify its failure
to be published in the "normal" journals. Don't mention
how all literature was queer until one day it wasn't,
and deny that gender ever affects your decisions
so these trans-genre poems keep appearing in trans journals.

Carrot

Originally published in Glintmoon

you try too hard to be a carrot
the orange is all wrong, insincere
salt bubbles up from the sea